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|  | **Datchet Parish Council** | 1 Allen WayDatchetBerkshireSL3 9HR |

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 **Minutes of a MEETING of the FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**held in the VILLAGE HALL, DATCHET
on FRIDAY 5TH JANUARY 2024, at 7.00pm**

**Present:** Cllr. D. Buckley (Chairman), Cllr. S. Young, Cllr I. Bacon

**In attendance:** Mrs S. Masikito (CLERK & RFO) Mrs J. Freeland

Public: 5 Members of the Public and Cllr M. Davies, Cllr I. Thompson, Cllr E. Larcombe

Cllr D. Buckley welcomed the meeting and advised that there would be a further public question time at the end of the agenda.

**FC23/01** **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

It was proposed and agreed that Cllr David Buckley be elected the Chairman of the Finance Committee.

**FC23/02** **ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

It was proposed and agreed that Cllr Susan Young be elected the Vice Chairman of the Finance Committee.

**FC23/03** **APOLOGIES**

Cllr A. Clemens

**FC23/04** **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS**

None.

**FC23/05** **PUBLIC SPEAKING**

Resident 1 - Asked i) in relation to Admin Projects, what is the £25k in AL39 to be used for and ii) Phase 2 Rec Ditch, assuming it is the culverting project and asked what is the figure of £66k based on, is it based on the detailed drawings and does it include the landscaping work?

The Chair commented i) He has been taking advice and have ringfenced costs for AL39, which could be more, if a judicial review is required. In the budget we had currently allocated £10k of which £3.5k had been spent.

The resident asked how the Parish Council would consult the public on their support for a judicial review.

The Chair commented that nothing is set at this time and is hoping that the council will not need to go forward with a judicial review.

He asked if there will be a public consultation if there is a judicial review, the Chair commented that there would be either a Council or public meeting. The resident commented on a consultation.

The Chair commented that he will take review on clarification on public consultation and will carry out what he is advised to do.

The Chair also commented that the item in the budget, along with most projects, will come back to full Council before they proceed.

Cllr Thompson was asked to respond to the question and advised that the initial cost is based on detailed drawings from Maydencroft who had given an indication of £70k, he has taken some money out of this and moved it in to the main budget. The landscaping on the open ditch will be a Part 2 for the future for which a presentation had previously been presented a Council meeting based on a proposal from the EA.

Resident 2 – Referred to the figure for Culverting the ditch and asked if this figure was from old costings as previous figures mentioned were around £100,000 and noted that this figure is still being used. Cllr Thompson commented that once the designs were complete, he would come back with more accurate figures.

The resident referred to the EA landscape scheme presented to the Council but they did not recall this presentation. The Clerk to look at this and to send the resident a copy.

Resident 1 - commented that in relation to the culverting of the ditch they did not believe that the figures can be accepted as reliable and accurate for the proposed works. The Chair commented that there was trust in the Lead Members, they are doing the work and presenting their budgets to the finance committee, they figures may change.

Cllr Young asked the resident what he would have done differently and he replied he would have questioned the figures more rigorously.

**FC23/06** **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

1. The terms of reference for the Finance and Governance Committee Version 1 were approved by all.

**FC23/07** **FINANCIAL TIMETABLE FOR 2023/2024 (Appendix 2)**

Noted. The Chair commented that a 3-5 year forward plan would be carried out during 2024.

**FC23/08** **BUDGET & PRECEPT 2024-2025 (Appendix 3)**

The Chair commented on the current figures and advised that an informal discussion of the committee will take place and they will take on board the public views.

He updated the public on meetings that had already taken place.

Cllr Bacon commented on the EMR projects, the need to move money back to the Ditch Pumpout project and advised that he could not find out if some of the projects had been approved, although clarification is still being looked into. Cllr Bacon gave the examples of the Jetties project, where the EMR has been reduced from £30k to £10k; and the culvert, referring to the minutes of 11/11/2019 where the council was told the project would cost £180k over three years and the DPC at that meeting voted not to go ahead at that stage.

He commented on funds of £40k set aside for a new cemetery project and the report produced by the cemetery expert which apparently said that the village is not running out of cemetery space. There is plenty of space for about 10 years based on 10 burials per year.

In addition this report states that DPC does not have a statutory duty to provide space, the RBWM has that duty.

Cllr Bacon said that currently there is a sum of £106k in the budget which may or may not be spent. This should not be used as a basis for increasing the precept.

The Chair opened the meeting to the public.

Resident 1 – Commented that the Neighborhood Plan Delivery Group had not yet met. They would like to be involved with the Council, they have funds in a bank account and within their policies there maybe plans which may overlap with council, and they would like to be involved in the meetings to see where NPDG can support the council and to assist with the projects.

The Chair commented on a process of transition with new members. Will come back to the resident.

Resident 2 – Commented on i) having a finance committee is a good way forward, ii) the lack of Councillors at some council meetings, iii) grounds maintenance plan, planning and managing projects and he felt that maintenance is a priority.

The Chair replied he took on his comments, reminded them that RBWM have responsibility of some aspects of the village, and that until the council has full resources there will be limitations to what can be achieved but recognised the hard work of Lead Members without the support of deputies, in particular grounds and properties.

Cllr Young commented in her new experience there is more diversity in thought and opinions on the council and with new members coming through the council is moving in the right direction.

The resident commented that there was a village groups willing to assist, such as the DVS and WAD, which he feels are underused. The Chair advised that there were spaces on the Council for new Councillors.

Resident 3 – Asked about the village border greens project which had not happened and the Chair advised that this was due to commence shortly. Questions were asked in relation to this project which were. Cllr Thompson said Priority areas 1 and 2 were being done. The resident asked for clarification and was told these were North Green and Garage Green. The rest would be done in 2025-2026. The Chair confirmed that work had started on these.

**FC23/09** **NEXT MEETING**

TBA – Informal meeting to be held 08.01.24

This meeting closed at 8.01pm

